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ABSTRACT

The role and status of English instruction in Italy is outlined. The role of English in Italy as a whole, English instruction within the educational system, the availability and training of language teachers, textbook selection and use, English outside the educational system, current research, American and British support for English instruction, and British involvement in teaching and training are reported. Overall, English is the principal foreign language taught and used in Italy and the demand for English has grown steadily. (RW)

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THE BRITISH COUNCIL
ENGLISH LANGUAGE DIVISION

ENGLISH TEACHING PROFILE

Country: ITALY **Date: February 1980**

1. Role of English

English is the principal foreign language studied and used in Italy. The demand for English has grown steadily for the past thirty years and was given extra impetus by Britain's entry into the Common Market in 1973. Increased demand has produced a situation in which schools, especially at the Lower Secondary (Scuola Media) level, are often unable to staff enough English classes to satisfy parents' wishes. English in the universities is important both as a main subject and as a means of access to information about research and development in science and commerce. University faculties of Economics or Political Science often have English Language service units. Business and tourism account for the bulk of day-to-day use of English in the country. English is taught on proportionately the same scale in the bilingual areas (Aosta, Alto Adige, Friuli and parts of Puglia, Calabria and Sicily) as in the rest of Italy.

2. English within the Educational System

2.1 **Primary** (6-11). English is not included in the primary curriculum. An experimental project for introducing English and French in the primary sector (8 +) is being carried out by a team working from the Ministry of Public Instruction (MPI) and is in its fourth year (1980). The pilot centres are Rome, Naples, Milan and Turin. Children leaving primary school at age 11 enter schools at the first level of secondary education usually referred to as 'Scuola Media'. Entry is non-selective. Attendance to age 14 is obligatory.

2.1.1 **Secondary** (11-18). English is first taught in Year One of the Scuola Media (11-14) and later in the Scuola Superiore. The present school-leaving age of 14 is to be raised to 15. There are 3 million pupils in about 10,000 lower secondary schools; about 2½ in the Upper Secondary. Of the latter, there are six different varieties, including technical institutes and vocational institutes. The school year conforms to EEC 'regulations' (215 days). The teacher/pupil ratio in lower secondary is 1:23 and in upper secondary 1:24 but there are wide divergences from these norms. The following figures apply only where the English option is taken (hours per week):

2.1.2 **Scuola Media** (11-14: 3 years)

Years	1	2	3
	2	3	3

Scuola Superiore (14-19: 5 years)

Years	1	2	3	4	5
Ginnasio + Liceo Classico	4	4			
Liceo Scientifico	3	4	3	4	4
Istituti Tecnici (Commerciali)	3	3	3	3	3
Istituti Magistrali (Primary Teacher-Training - 4 years)	4	4			

Istituti Professionali	Years	1	2	3
		3	3	3

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A major factor in the curriculum is the multiplicity of subjects taught, both at primary and secondary levels. A recent Minister of Public Instruction has said: In Italia si studia molto e male (in Italy a great deal is taught, and badly).

2.1.3 Any student with the Maturita (matriculation) is entitled to enter university. This means that first year university classes are heavily overcrowded. In some Departments of Language and Literature intensive language courses are run in addition to the usual literature classes, averaging three to six hours a week. Students taking the English option in other faculties get three hours' instruction a week on average. The standard of spoken English or Science faculties may well be more competent than those in Arts or Education. The study of English Literature does not call for a close acquaintance with any general bulk of creative or critical writing in English. (The Italian School system is clearly described in the OECD's 'Classification of School Systems', Paris 1975.)

2.2 At age 14 a school-leaving certificate, the 'Licenza Media', is taken. This examination is internal to the school but is monitored by outside assessors. The 'Licenza Media' is necessary for moving on to Upper Secondary school. At age 18/19 there is matriculation ('Maturita') of various types (classical, scientific, technical etc). Foreign languages are not taught in the liceo classico; in the liceo scientifico and istituto tecnico English is the major option. No British examinations are taken in the state system.

2.3 English is not a formal requirement for advancement within the educational system, although it is widely recognised by parents and career counsellors as extremely useful. In universities servicing language centres (where they exist) attract the greatest numbers for English. This also applies to Istituti Linguistici at Secondary level.

2.4 The responsibility for syllabus design lies centrally with the Ministry of Public Instruction, with some oversight from school superintendents within provinces (95 in Italy). The choice of textbooks in English rests with the teachers in schools. This accounts for the active interest of publishers, British and other. Thus, in one school district there may be a variety of different textbooks in use, even within one school of the larger, comprehensive type. A textbook is expected to remain in use for at least four years.

2.5 There is no institutionalised corps of subject inspectors, as in Britain. The supervision and control of educational programmes (including primary) is three-tiered: School Councils, District Educational Councils (759 in Italy) and Provincial Educational Councils (95). These are democratic and include teachers, parents, outside bodies and, in the case of higher secondary schools pupils. Their task is to assess the working of the centrally designed syllabuses in the school and the day-to-day running of the school. At the other extreme, the Provincial Educational Councils (25 members) have an Executive Committee which is chaired by the Provincial Superintendent who is a provincial government official and responsible to the Ministry in Rome for the proper application of the syllabus, maintenance of standards etc. This official is therefore not a subject inspector. The Provincial Executive has eight members - four practising teachers and four others. The District Councils (46 members) are intermediary between school and Provincial Council and constituted like the latter. There is a small

body of inspectors within the Ministry, but their main duties are administrative. This equally applies in the regions.

2.6 There is very little genuine ESP. In the Istituti Tecnici Commerciali, for instance, there is some emphasis on business correspondence but no real courses based on needs. On the other hand, courses on tourism and catering (especially in Rome) in vocational institutes do attempt to meet a real and expanding need. In-service courses for such teachers are organised by the regional authorities, assisted by the British Council. The higher secondary institutes have native speakers teaching special subjects, but a recent law prohibits the employment of such foreign teachers, who are to be replaced by Italians. At University, many faculties (eg Medicine, Engineering, Science) have native-speaker ESP teachers. A recent University reform allowing the recruitment of lettori from overseas on a fairly large scale should have a positive effect on the teaching of English at university level. Hitherto, lettori have been recruited by the University with some help from the British Council, with the Council in some instances offering a subsidy. Such subsidies are now being withdrawn.

2.7 **Teaching of English to Adults** (Nonformal) This sector is not highly developed in Italy as in other European countries (Colleges of Further Education in Britain; Volksuniversiteiten in the Netherlands; Volkshocheschulen in Germany). No statistics of courses in English are available, although occasional requests have been received, especially in North Italy. There is a growing interest in the concept of continuing education ('educazione permanente') and in the various language projects initiated by the Council of Europe, eg the unit/credit system; and some interest in language training for immigrants.

2.8 There are virtually no television or radio courses run for English. The University of Siena is showing interest in an Open University for Tuscany (the prime mover, Professor Bruttini, visited the Open University in Britain and the EEC in the autumn of 1979). His main interest is the teaching of languages (mainly English) with a possible teacher-education component.

2.9 **Language Teaching** (General)

No formal distinction is made between the teaching of English language and literature (see Literature appendix). For Scuola Media, the aims of the syllabus (in process of revision) are described as follows:

> 2.9.1 'Modern language teaching in the new type of secondary school has a cultural purpose and is aimed at developing an international conscience. In harmony with other subjects, particularly with the study of the Italian language, this teaching should help in forming a basic culture, in education of the intellect and in training of self-expression. The knowledge imparted will be sufficiently practical for pupils to succeed in understanding and manipulating the spoken language with ease, while at the same time receiving an introduction to the civilisation of the country whose language they are learning.'
>
> 2.9.2 The fulfilment of such aims depends on the motivation, not only of the pupils but of the teacher. Until recently there has been the traditional emphasis on the written word, but this has

shifted now to new communicative techniques (functional/notional). The effectiveness of this oral approach depends on the quality of the teacher's English, variable in Italy although, generally, competence in North Italy is higher than in the South. The quality of English among students often makes literature study an exercise in memory techniques, but this is not peculiar to Italy. What is important is that the competence in spoken English of the average Scuola Media teacher severely calls in question the validity of those oral methods which are central to fashionable methodology. An important development is the proposed introduction of the common-core approach to syllabus design. English is included in this common core.

3. Teachers of English

3.1 Approximate numbers are 30,000 state teachers of English in the secondary system (Media 20,000 and Superiore 10,000). Recruitment is from the Faculties of Letters and Faculties of Magistero of Universities. 'Lettere' and Magistero' differ chiefly in that faculties of Magistero have different entry qualifications, a longer basic course and take more interest in pedagogics. A first degree is the only essential qualification , and, since there is no pre-service teacher education, graduates go direct into teaching. The products of Lettere have a strong literary bent and usually feed the Higher Secondary (Superiore) Schools; those of Magistero have less literature (but not necessarily more language) and feed the Lower Secondary (Media). For both categories there is a lack of training in the teaching of language, with the latter category also requiring language improvement. There is an overproduction of teachers: a recent estimate gives the figure of one million teachers in primary and secondary (all subjects), with over 200,000 unemployed. Low salaries mean that large numbers of teachers have second jobs. Teachers of English are unestablished (incaricati) on entry into the profession; subsequently they sit a competitive examination and, if successful, they become established (di ruolo). Although language teachers are now expected to have a degree, there are still members of the profession whose degrees are in other subjects. The state's qualifying examination to become a teacher is called esame di abilitazione.

3.2 Expatriate Teachers

In secondary schools only Italian citizens can hold permanent posts. A number of assistenti from Britain are appointed each year (in 1975 there were 36) with specific responsibility for oral work. In addition, British subjects married to Italian citizens may get local contracts as assistenti (no figures are available). British subjects may also be appointed as language specialists in Istituti Tecnici and Istituti Professionali (vocational institutes) through the local provincial authorities. Recent legislation (1979), however, rules that all posts occupied by foreigners in secondary schools must be filled by Italian nationals. This produced an outcry from among the British expatriates affected, and the effective date has been deferred from September 1979 to September 1980. At University level, appointments are more liberal where expatriates can serve as assistenti or lettori. To be appointed, the foreign national must have a degree recognised as equivalent to the Italian laurea. Following a recent University reform, the universities are recruiting such lettori, who will be paid entirely out of University funds.

3.3 Scope for British Activity (Teacher Training)

In terms of need, this is unlimited, but constrained by the requirements of Italian law, the economic situation, problems of equivalence of degrees and diplomas, conditions of employment and Italy's unemployment problem. There have been two recent developments of interest. In the north particularly, some commercial schools of English with British directors of studies have established teachers' centres with a teacher-training and language improvement component. The British School in Trieste is an example; International House (a franchise school) in Turin another; and it is hoped that the British Institute in Bologna will follow suit. The establishment of such Centres has to be approved by the Ministry, which usually seeks the advice of the British Council. There are possible bases elsewhere, eg in Perugia. Agreed policy is for the British Council to encourage the formation of teachers' centres in this private sector. A recent move to create an association of recognised English language schools is gaining momentum; the English Language Officers are actively involved. A second development is in connection with the Ministry's in-service programme for Scuola Media Teachers (the Progetto Speciale per l'Insegnamento delle Lingue Straniere - PSLS). The training of teachers of English by Italian teacher-leaders is reinforced by a programme of language improvement for the trainees carried out by native-speaker assistants. For the 18 PSLS centres in Spring 1979 the Fulbright Commission provided four American field assistants. In addition, qualified native-speaker teachers were recruited in consultation with the British Council in Italy. These were usually British teachers working in commercial schools. In the second year of the PSLS project, forty-six training centres are planned, consequently more such teachers will be needed to supplement the eight field assistants provided by Fulbright. This looks like being a developing and fruitful field. (This section excludes the official activities of British Council ELOs in Italy - see 6.3.)

3.4 There is no formal teacher education for the secondary sector. Those entering the profession as teachers of English have only to produce evidence of an Italian degree and pass the esame di abilitazione. A degree in English is not necessary to be a teacher of English. The current mood, however, is moving towards some training, although the idea of obligatory pre-service training is still far away. For in-service training, there are two kinds of initiative - one voluntary, the other official. The first stems from the network of teachers' groups set up by professional associations (see 3.5) or through individual enthusiasm. The second is the PSLS referred to above. Both rely heavily for field support on the British Council. These in-service courses began in March 1979 and involve 104 hours of training in weekly 3-hour sessions. Although attendance by trainees is voluntary, it is expected that some official recognition will be provided, some cachet to provide incentives. British Council support takes the form of materials (handouts, films, cassettes) and seminars for Teachers' Groups/PSLS centres. In 1978/79 there were 187 seminars conducted by Council ELOs and supporting staff in 65 cities in Italy. In addition to this work, the Council provides scholarships and bursaries to Britain for teachers of exceptional merit (a ten-week course for twelve in Ealing College of Higher Education; a three-week course for twenty-five in Gipsy Hill College - both tailored to Italian state teachers of English only - and various TEFL summer schools). In 1978 and 1979 the Fulbright Commission sent thirty-five teachers to the USA for additional training in connection with PSLS.

3.5 **Professional Associations** (Foreign Languages, including English)

There are four organisations.

3.5.1 **Lingua e Nuova Didattica (LEND)** Formed in 1971. It is very active throughout Italy. The Council has collaborated with this group since its initiation. It is concerned with all foreign languages taught in Italian schools. It has political overtones in that it sees the problems of teaching standards and conditions as inseparable from the wider political framework. The LEND magazine, started in 1972 with Council cooperation, has become a national institution. ELO Italy is a member of the editorial board. Apart from regular teachers' groups meeting in various cities, it organises national seminars on selected topics. In 1978 the venue was Venice and the topic 'Communicative Teaching', with the Council of Europe providing its group of Experts on the Unit/Credit scheme and the British Council and French Embassy providing equal subsidies. The event attracted 1,500 teachers.

3.5.2 **Associazione Nationale Insegnanti Lingue Straniere (ANILS)** The British Council continues to support its activities when invited. The foundation of LEND impelled ANILS in 1972 to re-enter the field of teacher-training, which it had allowed to lapse. It publishes a monthly journal, several issues in arrears usually. ANILS is more conservative than LEND and tends to attract the older members of the profession. Unlike LEND, it has a good proportion of men as members.

3.5.3 **Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Italian (ATESI)** This is the only association exclusive to English. It is centred in Rome and is the inspiration of Professoressa Mary Finocchiaro. It is internationally well known. It functions as the Italian outlet of International TESOL, Washington. It publishes an occasional Newsletter. ELO Italy is a member of the committee.

3.5.4 **Association Européenne des Enseignants (AEDE)** This is related to the European Movement, with a secretariat in Switzerland. The Italian section has an office in Rome which organises educational activities, including language teacher-training. There is also an active group in Macerata (Marche) which organises summer schools in the Alps for teachers of English (including language improvement) as well as in Britain. The Rome Office publishes a monthly 'Scuola d'Europa'.

4. **Materials Support**

4.1 There is no shortage of textbooks which are produced in great abundance on the local market. Students buy their own books. There is great diversity, since books are not prescribed, and teachers make their own choice with the proviso that a book should last four years.

4.2 For a long time, locally produced textbooks relied heavily on grammatical exposition and mechanical pattern practice with little audio-visual support, hardware being scarce in schools. A widely used series is Alexander's New Concept English, including Mainline. However, there are growing trends towards the functional/notional approach, based mainly on the writings of David Wilkins, and new books based on it. The main stimulus for this has come through LEND and the activities of the British publishers, especially Longman Italia, which has a British

representative in Milan. The TRCs of the British Council in Rome, Milan and Naples provide a forum not only for the display aspects of book promotion but also for British publishers on visits, when facilities are given for lectures and demonstrations. Italian publishers are also very active in the ELT market with Italian or dual British/ Italian authorship. Examples are Link-up (Longman) and English 903 (Rinehart-Holt-Winston). The growing interest in communicative approaches to language teaching has resulted in much experimentation in do-it-yourself techniques. A recent workshop for university teachers of English (promoted by the British Council on self-access systems and autonomous learning) could lead to significant innovations where universities are grossly overcrowded.

4.3 The British Council is actively engaged in supporting the MPI Scuola Media Project (PSLS) through the supply of handouts, cassettes, films and books on methodology to reinforce the training of teachers nominated by the Ministry as coordinators and animatori for the nationwide in-service courses. The ELT series of teacher-training films are proving very popular.

4.3.1 Video-equipment is being installed this year in the British Council in Naples, Milan and Rome.

5. English Outside the Educational System

5.1 This section excludes the large private sector within the educational system run by religious orders and heavily subsidised by the Ministry of Public Instruction in the public interest; 10% of Primary and 25% of Secondary schools are in this category.

5.2.1 There is an extensive network of commercial schools of English, especially in North Italy. Many of these belong to chains such as the Oxford Schools, the British Schools, Wall Street Institute etc. In addition there are some British schools such as International House or Regent Schools which operate on a franchise basis, that is, they pay 2% pa for the use of the name. Many of these provide courses leading towards the Cambridge Syndicate's FCE and CPE examinations, the enrolments every year placing Italy globally second only to Greece. The British Council runs courses in two centres, Naples and Milan, but is interested in developing centres in other cities. For a note on a proposed association of 'recognised' English language schools, see para 3.3.

5.2.2 In the more industrialised parts of Italy (eg Turin, Milan and Rome) there are specialised courses within commercial schools and provision of staff for off-site courses. The British Council schools (traditionally tied to the Cambridge examinations) are also diversifying courses to meet this need. This year the British Council in Rome helped with the provision of ESP teachers for vocational in-service teacher-training courses (tourism, catering, etc) for the Lazio Region; and ESP courses are being planned this year in the British Council Milan and Naples.

6. British Support for the Teaching of English

6.1 General Staffing

There are substantial numbers of British teachers operating in ELT, both in the public and private sectors. Recent legislation (1979) requires

all teachers in the system to have Italian qualifications - see 3.2 above. This affects particularly those in technical schools concerned mainly with ESP. This does not affect universities, which are autonomous, although the system of lettori has been the subject of recent university reform. In 1979/80 there was one such post subsidised by the British Council in Genoa University, but this is being phased out.

University funds are now becoming available for the recruitment of Lettori (there are forty-nine universities (state and private)). It is possible that the British Council in London may be asked for help in recruitment, but universities are reluctant to meet or procedurally prevented from meeting the cost of this service. The number of appointments involved is not yet clear but likely to be large. Commercial schools are free to recruit from Britain (Italy and Britain being member states of the EEC).

6.2 **Staff: Council and Council-Recruited**

In 1977/78 Italy had two English Language Officers - ELO Italy in Rome and ELO North Italy in Milan. In 1978/79 the number rose to five with the addition of Assistant ELO posts in South Italy, North Italy and Rome. This increase was made chiefly to meet the needs of the Government-sponsored Scuola Media Project (PSLS) and of Council commitment to Anglo-American cooperation in ELT. For 1979/80 three further posts have been created and are funded within the DTO structure. These three Assistant Director of Studies posts - two in Milan and one in Naples - will provide supervision and coordination of the academic side of teachers' work in the DTOs, in-house training and retraining, and a link between DTOs and the Teachers' Resource Centres. They will also make some contribution to fieldwork in the ELOs' teacher-training programme. There are Directors of Studies in Milan and Naples. Of fourteen teaching staff in Milan, all are London-recruited. Naples has twenty-two teachers, some from London, some locally recruited. Two teachers in Milan and two in Naples have made important contributions to ELOs' in-service courses for Italian teachers of English working in the state system. Naples offers the Royal Society of Arts certificate course for non-native speakers who are teachers of English.

6.3 **ELT Activities: British Council Staff**

The pattern of the ELO contribution in Rome, Milan and Naples is fairly uniform - consultancy in the three Teachers' Resource Centres (TRCs), conducting seminars in the regional capital and in cities outside. These seminars are requested by local bodies - Teachers' Groups belonging to LEND, ANILS, and ATESI and meeting requests from universities (language teacher-training mainly). Such Council activity has the full support of the Ministry, English being the first foreign language and the Council being recognised as MG's official agency for its promotion and development. In 1978/79 ELOs conducted seminars and workshops in sixty-five Italian cities either for voluntary groups or for official PSLS centres (thirty-two cities in North Italy; eighteen in Central Italy and Sardinia; fifteen in South Italy and Sicily). In all, 187 seminars etc in 1978/79 were held, though this did not completely satisfy the demand. These seminars and workshops constitute the principal activity of ELOs. There are indications that the number of groups in 1979/80 will be greater still. The targets are teachers of English, mainly in the state schools, and the objective is teacher-training. Some groups belong to Anglo-Italian Associations (AIA), now fewer in number than in the immediate post-war years. Seminars are developed round handouts

giving lesson-plans etc, demonstrations of techniques, and assignments leading to follow-up activities in later seminars, plus assessment of materials by local teams.

6.4 **Recent Conferences etc**

There are three categories: annual general meetings of the three main associations - LEND, ANILS and ATESI; special topic-related convegnos run annually by LEND especially; and annual Conferences run by the Council in Italy for ELTT and DTO staff and Cambridge Syndicate Examinations Local Secretaries. The Council was represented in 1978/79 at the annual meetings of LEND (Faenza), ANILS (Rimini) and ATESI (Rome). ELO Italy is a member of ATESI's Board and is also a member of LEND's Editorial Board. In September 1978 ANILS held a three-day national convention which attracted an attendance of about 300 teachers from schools and university faculties all over Italy. In October 1978, LEND organised an ambitious meeting in Venice devoted to the idea of communicative competence and largely centring on the work of the Council of Europe (see 3.6) in foreign languages (Unit/Credit System). Of the 1,500 present, the majority were teachers of English. The project director Professor J L M Trim was present, as were other Council of Europe experts. Professor Trim was also a guest lecturer in the University workshop on Autonomous Learning. It is evident that the Council of Europe and the EEC are gaining some momentum in Italy.

There are two typer of annual conference for Council staff - the Staff Conference itself, at which ELTT matters are a top priority, and the annual ELT Staff Conference, dealing with both ELTT and DTO. The triennial meeting of Cambridge Syndicate Local Secretaries was last held in Florence in January 1979 where a senior examinations officer from Cambridge (W G Shepheard) was present along with Council ELOs and DOSs.

6.5 **Council Teaching Materials**

In addition to commercial materials (see 4.1), full use is made of ELTI films, particularly in the Scuola Media Project, tapes supplied by ELIT, including master scripts, handouts locally produced by ELOs, and a variety of realia available through the Council's TRCs. Videotapes will scon become available in Naples and Milan, where much material is produced by the teachers in the Council's institutes. The Open University TEFL project now under consideration will open up new fields of materials support, particularly video and cassettes.

6.6 **Direct Teaching of English**

6.6.1 Schools of English are operated by the British Council in Milan and in Naples. Milan has an enrolment of 1,500, Naples 2,500. Milan operates with a staff of 14 teachers, a Director of Studies and an Assistant Director of Studies. Naples is staffed by twenty-two teachers, a Director of Studies and an Assistant Director of Studies.

6.6.2 The range of courses offered in the two schools varies somewhat because of variations in local demand but as in most English language teaching institutions in Italy work towards the Cambridge examinations at First Certificate and Proficiency levels accounts for most of the timetable. Milan, partly as an alternative and partly as complement to the Cambridge sequence, offers candidates for the examinations of the Institute of Linguistics

(Preliminary and Grade One) and for those of the Association of Recognised English Language Schools (ARELS) (at Preliminary, Certificate and Diploma levels). Naples offers candidates for one major examination of the Royal Society of Arts (RSA), to which reference is made in the next paragraph. The demand for children's classes (starting at age 8) is high in Naples and accounts for approximately 15% of enrolments.

6.6.3 A Teacher's Resource Centre organised by an English Language Officer or Assistant English Language Officer and catering primarily to Italian teachers of English in the state schools functions in close collaboration with the Council's direct teaching operations (DTO) both in Milan and in Naples. The Milan school carries a second post of Assistant Director of Studies the holder of which is responsible for maintaining this collaboration. In Naples the pattern differs somewhat in that three teachers are allocated to work half-time in the resource centre. In both centres DTO staff contribute to a programme of seminars for Italian teachers organised by the English Language Officer or Assistant English Language Officer and in both places they themselves make use of centre facilities. The DTO professional contribution to Council teacher-training programmes in Italy is important and may be summarised as follows:

Provision of regular staff in resource centres (as indicated above).

Provision of ad hoc contributions to seminars etc for Italian teachers.

Organisation of language improvement course for Italian teachers of English.

Organisation of courses leading to the RSA Certificate in TEFL for Overseas Teachers (Naples).

Exchange and monitoring of materials relevant both to DTO and the state schools.

6.6.4 An association, Associazione Italiana per le Scuole di Lingua Inglese, is being formed to promote improved standards of staff and client welfare among directors of schools of English. The two British Council schools are founder-members of this association and the Council's English Language Officers have rights of attendance. The Association will invite applications for membership during 1980.

7. American Support for the Teaching of English

7.1 In spite of an American recession in ELT overseas, except for self-financing bi-national centres, the agreement between Presidents Andreotti and Carter in 1977 for mutual aid in language teaching led to the creation of PSLS (see above passim) in 1978. Courses started belatedly in Spring 1979. In the summer of 1978, thirty-five potential teacher-leaders attended a six-week course in San Francisco State University. Most of these became the leaders in the eighteen PSLS centres regarded as amounting to a pilot project limited to eight of Italy's twenty

regions. In summer 1979 another thirty-four teachers attended a six-week course in the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), and the intention is to create twenty-eight new PSLS centres in 1979 to bring the total to forty-six. The project is directed in the Ministry of the Ufficio Studi e Programmazione and on the American side by the Fulbright Commission in Rome, working closely with the ICA. An English Teaching specialist post has been created in the ICA for this purpose. In 1978 there were four native-speaker assistants, Fulbright-recruited and paid. The active support of the British Council in Rome and London is consistent with the Anglo-American cooperation agreement and our official commitments to Italy under the British-Italian Cultural agreement.

8. Current Research and Bibliography

8.1 The Ministry of Public Instruction proposes to have set up in each of the twenty regions a Regional Institute for Education, Research and Experimentation which will also concern itself with in-service courses. These are still in the planning stage, but when operational they will constitute a marked devolution or decentralisation in educational administration.

8.2 The experimental project (see 2.1) for the teaching of foreign languages at primary level (English and French) is in its second year, and limited to four centres - Milan, Turin, Rome and Naples. This is sponsored by the Ufficio Studi e Programmazione of the Ministry. It is called ILSSE (Introduzione delle Lingue Straniere nelle Scuole Elementari). It is part of an EEC-inspired programme. In 1978 the Council assisted in providing four experts from Britain for regional seminars (Turin, Milan, Rome and Naples).

8.2.1 Many investigations and minor research projects are carried out on an individual or group basis (for example, by LEND members) for teaching at secondary level. This applies also to universities. Bologna (Guy Aston) has produced a paper on a threshold level for reading. Turin (Peter Chandler) is concerned also with the reading skill, the topic for a major seminar in 1979. The visit of the Council of Europe Project team to LEND's Venice Seminar in 1978 has awakened interest in this approach, and some work is being done in Cagliari, Milan and Catania. The threshold level specification for Italian (livello soglia) was worked out by a team under the direction of a professor at Rome/Calabria universities.

8.2.2 A significant investigation was carried out in 1979 in a University Workshop on 'Autonomous Learning and Self-Access Systems', when J L M Trim was guest lecturer provided by the British Council. The topic is of specific interest to Italy, where universities are overcrowded and alternative systems of learning are relevant. These workshops tend to become annual events.

8.2.3 The most active in the field of publications (teaching of English) is the LEND magazine Lingue e Nuova Didattica which appears four times a year. There are no publications specially devoted to the teaching of English, although articles frequently appear in magazines and newsletters (eg ATESI).

9. General Statement

9.1 The greatest encouragement in the ELT situation in Italy comes from the dedication of teachers' groups in cities all over the country.

These groups work to regular programmes, and the Council is closely associated with them. The overwhelming majority are women; they provide a grass-roots base for pressure on the Ministry to promote reforms in the teaching of foreign languages and in the structuring of the highly centralised system. Although curriculum and syllabuses are prescribed by the Ministry - admittedly in very vague terms - the freedom given to teachers to choose their own textbooks encourages considerable variety and experimentation. New trends in teaching have rapidly become fairly widespread, and many schools are adopting and adapting the more recent textbooks. Another strength is the recognition by the Ministry of Public Instruction of the British Council's role as an official foreign agency for English teaching. The weaknesses are similar to those in many other countries with highly centralised systems of administration, and are aggravated in Italy by its geography and the existence of poor, badly developed areas in parts of the South. Italy is educationally very conservative and must take into account powerful traditional influences. The slow emergence of a general system of teacher education and the absence of pre-service training in the secondary sector are part of this conservatism. Low salaries also force teachers to look for second jobs. Finally, there is little if any cooperation between universities and the state sector even though the closest liaison is essential if the necessary research to support reform and up-dating is to be carried out.

The recent creation of an association of university teachers of English - Associazione Italiana di Anglistica (AIA) - may act as a catalyst.

9.2 One important feature of the ELT situation in the future will be the introduction of the British Council/University of Cambridge English Language Testing Service in 1980. Pre-tests were conducted in Rome in June 1979. Another is the proposal to introduce an Open University (UK) TEFL course overseas, with Italy possibly as one of the pilot countries. The Council's institute in Naples already runs the two-year RSA course for non-native speaker teachers of English.